UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EMERGENT LITERACY STRATEGIES IN PRIMARY TEACHERS OF NEPAL

BY

BEJUNA JOSHI ©

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Bejuna Joshi

Bejuna Joshi
11/48 Bakum Bahal,
Lalitpur, Nepal

January 29, 1999

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EMERGENT LITERACY STRATEGIES IN PRIMARY TEACHERS OF NEPAL submitted by BEJUNA JOSHI in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

Dr. Roberta McKay
(Co-Supervisor)

Dr. Lorene E. Turner
(Co-Supervisor)

Dr. Olenka Bilash

Date: January 22, 1999

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to

my husband

Dr. Hemanta R. Joshi

my children

Pragyan Joshi and Sangyan Joshi

and my parents

Lalita Rajbhandari and Laxman Das Rajbhandari (R.I.P.)

Abstract

The main objective of the study was to promote the professional development of primary teachers of Nepal in relation to emergent literacy.

A series of five workshops was conducted to share with teachers the methods of using a wide range of literature and expressive writing. Teachers were asked to use the strategies learned in the workshops in subsequent classes in their schools.

The teachers' reflective journals, interviews and classroom observations were used to find out teachers' perspectives on reading a wide variety of literature to the young children and engaging them in expressive writing.

The concepts of reading stories and journal writing to children were well accepted by participant teachers. They found a high rate of student participation in the classroom because of the story reading activity. They realized the importance of reflection on their own teaching and sharing ideas in a community of learners to bring improvement in their teaching practice.

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I INTRODUCTION

Background

For many years it was thought that a child should have a mental age of six and half years before formal reading instruction should begin (Morphett & Washburne, 1931). Later, importance was placed on the child's reading readiness. A variety of readiness activities were prepared and used for those children who were not ready to read. The reading readiness concept assumed that all children must master a sequence of skills before they can begin to read, and there was no focus on writing (Copper, 1997). The current research in the field of teaching reading and writing has questioned the above paradigms. Research in the field of teaching and writing pointed out that children could recognize signs and other environmental print, retell stories, scribble, invent print-like writing, and listen to stories read aloud to them. Clay (1966) introduced the term emergent literacy to capture the new paradigm on how children learn to read and write. Emergent literacy is the idea that children grow into reading and writing with no real beginning or ending point, that reading and writing develop concurrently, interrelatedly, and according to no one "right" sequence, or order (Strickland, 1990; Teale & Sulzby, 1986).

According to Teale and Sulzby (1984), emergent literacy is concerned with the earliest phases of literacy development, the period between birth and the time when children read and write conventionally. It is a term that characterizes the manner in which young children learn more and more about the culturally elaborated writing system that is used around them.

Emergent literacy is a new perspective, in which the emphasis shifts from teaching reading and writing skills to facilitating children's learning through their active involvement in language and print activities. Emergent literacy includes aspects of both reading and writing, requiring parents and teachers to be helpfully alert to the evolving interest of children in both regards (Hildebrand & Badar, 1991).

The proponents of emergent literacy theory argue that this development should continue and be actively supported in school by primary teachers. Emergent literacy assumes that the child acquires some knowledge about language, reading, and writing before coming to school. Literacy development begins early in life and is ongoing (Morrow, 1993).

Nepalese Context

The paradigm for early reading and writing in the context of Nepal is totally different. In Nepal, emphasis is placed on teaching language in terms of four basic skills of language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is believed that the child acquires these skills one after another. Thus, there is an emphasis on teaching listening, speaking, reading, and writing separately.

In Nepal, teaching depends heavily on prescribed textbooks. The teachers carry out the activities based on the textbooks which allow the students to be engaged in singing and playing, observing pictures and explaining, recognizing, and showing understanding of the sight words and simple sentences. In addition, the textbooks provide the opportunity for pre-writing exercises, and letter writing exercises which are integrated with the picture discussions. These activities provide little opportunity to facilitate children's learning by their active involvement in language and print activities.

With an intention to improve the teaching/learning situation within Nepalese classrooms, two major education projects, the Seti-Project and the Primary Education Project (PEP) developed a variety of reading materials and distributed them to project schools. The materials produced by these projects were related to children's stories, and

some of them were supplementary reading materials related to the themes of language learning and social studies and health (cited in BPEMP, 1991).

In this regard, BPEMP (Basic and Primary Education Master Plan) remarks:

> The PEP has developed considerable efforts and resources for the development of supplementary readers which are aimed at reducing the total dependency by the teacher and students on a single subject text-book. In total, 43 readers have been produced. Most of the readers were designed for improving reading skills and habits of the students, a few were meant to reinforce the curricular content. (p. 235)

Regarding the use of supplementary reading materials in the Seti Project, a study was conducted which indicated that the Seti Project produced 33 supplementary readers up to June 1985 and distributed them to the project schools with an aim to develop reading habits and skills in primary students and instructional improvement. However, it is reported that in many schools these readers have not been used properly or effectively (UNESCO, 1985). There is a need for using these readers more consistently and regularly (CERID, 1986). Realizing the need of the country to use such reading materials, along with the literature on emergent literacy, led to the current research topic. The researcher felt that it is an appropriate and timely study.

Research work in the field of early literacy has shown

that "being read to" is very important for the literacy development of children and that reading and writing are interrelated processes. Early childhood programs should encourage children to write often and for a wide variety of purposes and audiences. Such programs should provide many opportunities for the sharing of a wide range of literature with young children and exploration of a variety of methods of teaching children to read a wide range of materials.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the present study was to promote professional development of primary teachers of Nepal in relation to emergent literacy. Through a series of workshops two specific aspects of emergent literacy were focused upon:

-the importance of sharing a wide range of literature with young children, and

-the importance of engaging young children in expressive writing.

In the workshops, teachers were given opportunities:

a) to become acquainted with strategies for reading literature to children and to engage children in expressive writing through journal writing, and

b) to actually implement these strategies in their classrooms and discuss results with colleagues.

Research Questions

In this study, the following research questions were investigated:

1. What strengths and weaknesses do the teachers perceive in using the children's literature books in the classroom?
2. What changes will the teachers notice in the language behavior of young children after reading a wide variety of literature?
3. What strengths and weaknesses do the teachers perceive in involving the students in journal writing?
4. What changes do the teachers notice in the students' writing after involving the students in journal writing?

Significance of the Study

In Nepal, people generally believe that young children learn oral language naturally, so in school emphasis is given to teaching reading and writing. There is a practice of teaching copying and letter formation exercises, as well as the memorization of the alphabet, arithmetic tables, or material from the textbooks. Sometimes the teacher starts the lesson by reading out the contents from the textbook and asks the students to repeat after him/her. In grade one, there are no activities in the school instruction such as 'write a story' or 'write a letter to your mom' or 'read to us what you have written'.

Supplementary story reading is not a commonly used method of teaching in Nepal. However the teachers do occasionally tell or read the stories from the textbooks to their students, particularly in grade one.

In Nepal, parents sometimes tell stories to children. But, there is no tendency to read storybooks to their children. Western research shows that preschool children who learn to read on their own generally have had an adult read to them repeatedly (Clark, 1976; Durkin, 1966; cited in Copper, 1997).

According to Strickland & Taylor (1989) and Taylor & Strickland (1986), there is no substitute for reading to children at home, however, classroom read-aloud periods can provide some of the same benefits especially for those children who have not been read to at home (cited in Cooper, 1997).

The present study focused on two important dimensions: reading storybooks and journal writing in teaching language arts in Nepal. Selected primary teachers in Nepal were acquainted with the value and effect of reading storybooks to the children in the classroom through a series of workshops. Teachers were also exposed to different strategies for reading storybooks and asked to read the storybooks in the classroom. It is hoped that the study

will help to contribute to improving the literacy levels of children of Nepal.

Delimitation of the Study

This study was based on the experiences of three primary school teachers so that the generalization of the findings should be made carefully. The benefits expressed by involved teachers after reading stories to their young students and after using journal writing in their classrooms can be considered as evidence of the outcomes of story reading and journaling in the classroom.

Overview of the Thesis

A review of literature related to the study is presented in Chapter II. Chapter III deals with research design, data collection and data analysis. The detailed description of day to day workshops is presented in Chapter IV. The discussions related to the research questions are presented in Chapter V. The study findings along with thoughts for further research are described in Chapter VI.

Personal Context

When I completed a master's degree in education from Tribhuvan University of Nepal, I worked in the Research Center for Education Innovation and Development (CERID). My job responsibilities were to collect the data, analyze the

data, and prepare research reports along with the research team. I worked as a research assistant in different projects which were related to primary education, non-formal education and program evaluation. Later, I joined the Primary Education Project (PEP) under the Ministry of Education, Nepal. The main objective of the Primary Education Project was to improve the quality of primary education in the country. This project is currently running in Nepal by the name of Basic Primary Education Project (BPEP).

This project has the following major thrust:

. forming school clusters under resource centers (RCs),
. inservice teacher training,
. provision of support materials to teachers and students,
. supervision through RCs,
. improvement of management in schools,
. introduction of national primary curriculum,
. improvement of national primary curriculum,
. improvement of physical facilities including buildings,
. nonformal education (NFE) program,
. pre-school education program,
. construction of administrative buildings. (CERID, 1997; p. 23)

Prior to my current graduate studies in Canada, I was initially a coordinator of the "Out of School Program"

which was designed for the children of ages 6-14 who were not able to attend school for various reasons. Then I worked in the new grade one materials program. At that time, the project was experimenting with new textbooks for grade one in language arts, mathematics and social studies in its 300 schools. My job responsibility was to conduct studies regarding the effectiveness of the new grade one materials. At this point, I came to Canada in connection with my husband's study at the University of Alberta. I was admitted to the University of Alberta Masters' program in Early Childhood Education. Through my studies, I came to realize that the notion of teaching reading and writing has been completely changed from what I had known from my home country Nepal. Research (for example Clay, 1975; Holdaway, 1979; Teale, 1988) clearly indicates that young children learn to use oral and written language skills most effectively through immersing themselves in a variety of meaningful activities where they are actively engaged in reading, writing and speaking.

As I realized the importance of reading to young children, it made me reflect back on the use of supplementary reading materials which is one of the least successful programs in the BPEP project. In Nepal, generally, there is a custom of telling rather than reading stories to children. There is a belief that the main

purpose of stories is to impart moral values. Normally, after the completion of telling stories, the teacher or parents ask the children what they learned from the story. Furthermore free writing was also not introduced in the Nepalese curriculum and textbooks of grade one at all. However, North American studies revealed that teachers have used journals effectively with preschoolers, kindergartners, and other young children who are emergent readers or who have not yet learned to read (Elliott, Nowosad, & Samuels, 1981; Hipple, 1985; Nathan, 1987; cited in Tompkins, 1994). Queries and concerns began to come to my mind regarding how little use was made of supplementary reading materials in the classroom. Why were the reading materials and journaling concept not being used in the classroom? How could I make teachers understand the value of reading storybooks and journal writing to young children? How could I help the teachers in establishing a reading corner in their classrooms?

I decided to work in the field of early reading and early writing to create an atmosphere where teachers could read storybooks to children so that children could enjoy a variety of stories, and could explore writing through journalling. By being involved in this research, teachers will learn the different strategies for reading storybooks to young children and engaging children in journal writing.

In this study, I will introduce the process of reading aloud and journal writing to young children through the medium of a series of workshops for primary teachers. These workshops will be a means for bringing change and developing emergent literacy strategies in the primary teachers of Nepal.

II LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will review literature from English speaking countries related to the major components of emergent literacy: early reading, early writing, journal writing and the importance of reading to young children, as well as strategies of professional development of primary teachers.

Early Reading

Young children possess knowledge of language and print early in life (Goodman and Goodman, 1979). Children begin to learn to read when they develop an awareness that written language makes sense. During the process they become acquainted with pictures, print, and words in the environment and finally go through certain levels of literacy development. In the earliest stages of literacy acquisition, children are unable to determine where a reader looks while reading - at the text or illustration (Clay, 1979a; Reid 1966). But as the children gain experience, they begin to realize that it is the print, not the picture, that a reader reads (Schickendanz, 1994).

Studies have shown that print awareness emerges by age three and increases significantly prior to first grade. Lomax and McGee (1985) found that a 3 year old did better on

print awareness tasks than on any other area of prereading ability.

Children identify the print frequently found in their surrounding environment, such as labels on cereal boxes, signs on restroom doors and names of fast food restaurants by using environmental context cues.

Several environmental print studies assessed how accurately children could recognize words from environmental print and determined which cues children used to recognize these words. Ylisto (1967) presented 25 printed items from the natural environment to 229 four, five and six years old non-readers. Words presented in isolation were less frequently identified.

Investigations have also revealed how the environment supports literacy development. Children as young as three are able to read such common words in their environment as Burger King, McDonald's, Coke, Sprite, and Pizza (Goodman & Altwerger, 1981; Manson, 1980; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984; Hiebert, 1986; Ylisto, 1967). The results of these investigations indicate that very young children are aware of print, letters and words, and that their ability to identify familiar printed symbols constitutes the beginning of reading. According to Goodman (1984), the roots of literacy are established in early childhood by most children in literate societies. Through interacting with the

environment, the children discover how print is organized and used as well as what it is used for.

According to Wiseman and Robeck (1983), young children are able to demonstrate such knowledge of books and book handling such as (1) where to begin reading, (2) the difference between picture and print, (3) awareness of the left to right progression of print, (4) the difference between the beginning and ending of the book and (5) how to turn pages.

Holdaway (1986) explains four processes that enable children to acquire reading ability. They are observation, collaboration, practice, and performance. According to him, the child first observes being read to or sees the adult reading. The second process is collaboration with an individual who interacts with the child. The third process is practice where the learner tries himself. Finally, in performance, the child shares what has been learned.

Early Writing

Early writing behavior can be observed through children writing on paper, walls and books. When children first attempt to create print, what they create may look like scribbles. Usually these scribbles have certain characteristics of print (Schickedanz, 1994). Schickendanz further states that learning how to write involves learning

-to write alphabet letters,

-how writing and speech relate,

-how form and style vary depending on the situation, and

-to predict how a reader will react to what has been written. (p. 73)

In observing children scribbling and inventing primitive texts, researchers have noticed that children seem to know what writing is far before they know much about how to write in correct form.

According to Dyson (1986), children's writings develop through constant invention and reinvention of the forms of written language. Children try to form the letters, and texts by inventing different forms and these forms resemble conventional letters. In this regard, Bissex (1980) states that as they reconstruct their abilities to produce messages and texts, they simultaneously reconstruct their knowledge about written language.

Children learn about writing by observing and by participating with the adults in the literacy events. In addition, children need to work independently on the functions and forms of writing that they have experienced through interactions with the adults and siblings.

Young Children's Journal Writing

Journal writing can be used with preschoolers and kindergartners to encourage writing fluency. According to Tompkins (1994), young children's journal entries include drawing as well as some type of text. Children may write scribbles, random letters and numbers, simple captions, or extended texts using invented spelling. According to List (1984), children's writing is almost synonymous with drawing. Many journal entries produced by kindergarten children, especially at the beginning of the year are in the scribble form. It is very common to find a letter from the child's name mixed in with scribble-writing (Clay, 1975).

In kindergarten classroom, some teachers scribe the journals of the students. Scribing encourages the young writers to make connections between their pictures and oral presentations (Hipple, 1985). According to Brock and Green (1992) the teacher's recording of dictation served multipurpose: a) to share individually with the teacher, b) to model the writing process, and c) to document progress in writing for future reference. It was also found that some teachers read the journals inviting the child to read along.

Sharing of the journal in the classroom is important. It provides a sense of purpose and a feeling of pride (Bouas, Thompson, & Farlow, 1997). Hipple (1985) noted some developments in describing, questioning, and listening

behaviors because of sharing journals in her kindergarten classroom.

Broke and Green (1992) conducted a study to investigate the influence of social context on kindergartner's journal writing. They found a physical environment rich in print influenced the kindergartner's written text and topics used for journal writing. The purpose of a journal is to allow children a chance to explore ideas and the writing process without restriction (Newman, 1984).

Reading to Young Children

According to Teale and Sulzby (1986), reading to children helps to make them literate by giving them a sense of what reading is about, introducing them to the form and structure of written language and acquainting them with literary conversations. There is a direct connection between reading to children and literacy development. Children who learn to read naturally before entering school usually have extensive story-reading experience (Doake, 1981; Durkin, 1966; Clark, 1976; Plessas & Oakes, 1964; & Sutton, 1964; cited in Schickendanz, 1994). According to Wells (1981), experience with books during the preschool years is related to successful literacy development. Morrow (1983) found those kindergarten children who displayed a high interest in literature had been read to more frequently

and had more story books in their homes than children with low interest.

When children are read to in a natural environment, they create frameworks for stories in their minds (Glazer, 1994). According to Glazer children learn how stories begin, progress and how this comes about. They begin to develop a sense of story. They learn:

-how the written language system works,

-what the print represents,

-what are the purposes of the books,

-what reading is,

-that stories can be written down,

-that there is some correspondence between sounds and symbols on the pages,

-how to predict what stories are about, and

-how to remember stories and other data from text. (p. 7)

According to Bissex (1980) reading to children provides them with a sense of what reading is all about. Children discover fun, laughter, adventure, romance, information and enlightenment when they have a happy introduction to books (Hildebrand, 1991). A positive correlation between vocabulary development and being read to has been found (Burroughs 1972; Chomsky, 1972; Fodor, 1966; Irwin 1960; cited in Teale, 1982).

Feitelson, Kita, and Goldstein (1986) found that reading stories daily to students influenced their story understanding and retelling abilities. Feitelson also noted that frequent reading aloud in the classroom improves children's decoding (sounding out words) abilities (cited in Popp, 1996). Popp (1996) indicates that reading literature aloud improves composition skills, including the increased use of complex phrases, clauses and sentences in writing. Manson (1980) found that children developed metacognitive knowledge about how to approach reading tasks and how to interact with teachers and parents. Durkin (1982) summarized the benefits of reading to children as follows:

-fosters positive attitudes towards books and school,
-motivates children to want to become readers themselves,
-gives them opportunities to hear the syntactic patterns of literacy language,
-provides a model of good oral reading,
-communicates information that will help with comprehension when they themselves read, and
-teaches concepts and word meaning. (p. 140)

Reading storybooks to students aids language development, increases comprehension, enriches vocabulary, develops an interest in reading, and creates a bond between reader and listeners.

The process of learning to read and write begins in babyhood when children are for example, read to, shown books, sung songs and told rhymes and stories. It is not only the visual contact with print but the different patterns of language heard from these sources that contribute to the language experience of children and provide a rich source on which they can draw to begin to make sense of print. Through adult/child interactions about shopping lists, labels, letters, recipes and many other forms of print, children develop awareness of what print is and how we use it to achieve particular goals.

As children become more familiar with printed pages they begin to imitate them in their writing. This is the beginning of children's writing behavior. The children's writing behavior takes place in the various phases before it takes on the shape of conventional print. These will range from scribbling, to drawing, to forming words, to forming sentences, to writing sequenced stories.

Each child should be free to choose a level of conveying messages that is comfortable for him in order to communicate to an audience in a meaningful way. We as a teacher should build instructions on what children already know and can do, as this provides knowledge, skills, and dispositions for lifelong learning.

According to Wells (1985), the single most important activity for building the skills essential for initial reading success appears to be reading aloud to children. Reading to young children is important in the development of their verbal and written language. Reading stories aloud as a part of the teachers' instructional schedule was shown to contribute to the students' reading growth. It affected their vocabulary acquisition, widened their world knowledge, deepened their reading comprehension, and changed their attitudes toward books and leisure reading (Elley, 1989; Graves, 1986; Hoffman, Roser & Battle 1993; cited in Rosenhouse, Feitelson, Kita & Goldstein, 1997).

Involving children in free writing is also very important along with reading storybooks to young children. Journal writing is one of the best ways to involve children in free writing. According to Newman (1984), the purpose of a journal is to allow children a chance to explore ideas and the writing process without restriction. She further stated that journal writing should be daily, and the writing must never be marked for neatness and or spelling. Teachers must create an environment for writing and invite the children to write.

Professional Development

This section provides a definition of professional development, discusses professional development through reflective thinking and a community of learning, as well as considers factors which influence or hinder implementations of effective professional development.

Definitions

According to Fullan (1982), professional development is a systematic attempt to bring about change in teacher's attitudes and beliefs as well as change in classroom practices which will lead to improvement in students' learning. He further states that teachers are expected to implement change in their use of materials, teaching strategies, and beliefs and values as a result of professional development activities (Fullan, 1982).

While looking for definitions of professional development, the word staff development and professional development were used interchangeably. According to Caldwell and Marshall's (1982) definition, staff development is any activity or set of activities designed to enhance an institution through the promotion of the personal/professional growth of the administrative and/or instructional staff of that institution.

Professional Development Through Reflective Thinking

According to Ross (1989), reflective thinking is a way of thinking about educational matters that involve the ability to make rational choices and to assume responsibility for those choices. Lesley (1992) states that reflection refers to the capacity of a teacher to think creatively, imaginatively and at times, self-critically about classroom practice. In this regard, John Dewey said that the best way for teachers to learn more about teaching and learning is to step back and reflect on their own experiences. Supporting the idea of Dewey, Posner (1985) said that reflective thinking allows the teacher to examine critically the assumptions that schools make about what can count as acceptable goals and methods, problems and solutions. Although we all must live within some constraints, often we accept as predetermined by authority or tradition far more than is necessary (cited in Jagger, 1989). He further states that more learning is derived from reflecting on an experience than is derived from the experience it-self. Reflection on one's own teaching can be carried out through reflective journaling. Taggert and Wilson (1998) state that journals provide the reflective practitioner with a means of

. Analyzing and reasoning through a dilemma,

. Enhancing development and reflection,

. Promoting growth in critical analysis of teaching,
. Promoting awareness of relationships between educational psychology and practical experiences,
. Systematically reflecting on self-development and on actions within classroom and work contexts,
. Practicing reflective inquiry,
. Building understanding by writing about what is learned, and
. Linking understanding with classroom practice. (p. 91)

According to Posner (1996), a general format for dialogue journals would include

. Date and time of the entry
. Brief sequencing of the events of the day
. Elaboration on details of one or two episodes based on level of excitement, puzzlement, or confirmation,
. Analysis of the episode
  -Possible explanations for event
  -Significance of the event
  -What was learned
  -Questions raised
  -Relevance
  -Responsibility on the part of the practitioner. (p. 91)

Community of Learners

Teachers' professional development can be enhanced by bringing together a group of teachers as a community of learners. In the group, the teachers can share success stories with each other and help each other work through problems. According to Reutzel and Cooter (1992), such a group provides a means for teachers to "meet to discuss challenges, problems, and potential solutions" as well as provide a chance to give and receive encouragement (cited in Cramer, Hurst, & Wilson, 1996). According to Bullough and Gitlin (1991), teachers need to be a community of learners supporting and sustaining each other's growth.

Within the community of learners, teachers have an opportunity to dialogue, which is essential for professional development. Through dialogue, teachers get a chance to share their own ideas and make connections between old and new ideas.

Factors Which Influence or Hinder Implementation of Effective Professional Development

Several factors facilitate or constrain the transfer of knowledge and training from professional development activities to the classroom situation. Some of these factors are materials, time, assistance, follow-up, and support of the principal.

Materials

Ward (1985) states that a characteristic of effective professional development which produces change is that "the necessary support materials and technical assistance are provided at the school level" (cited in Carter, 1988, p. 22).

Time

Time is an important factor in the process of staff development. According to Stallings (1987) teachers need time for self analysis and reflection if they are to bring changes into the classroom. The effectiveness of professional development activities increases when teachers are provided time to talk about new information and teaching behaviors and strategies (Ward, 1985).

Assistance

Teachers need assistance to apply the new skills in the classroom that they have learnt in the professional development sessions. In this regard, McQuarrie, Wood and Thompson (1984) say that after participating in professional development activities teachers should have access to support service to help them implement new behaviors. Joyce and Showers (1980) suggest peer coaching for teachers to assist one another in implementing new behaviors.

Follow-up

Follow up is very essential to ensure how the teachers are feeling about applying new skills in the classroom and to provide the necessary feedback for the teachers. Guskey (1986) claims that change in teachers' attitudes and beliefs occur after teachers have had a chance to practice strategies with their students and to see the results. Thus teachers need practice, feedback, more training, and more practice again (cited in Carter, 1988).

Support of the Principal

Leadership and support from the principal are crucial factors to the success of professional development. In this regard Fullan (1982) concludes that the principal is either a help or a hindrance to the teacher who is trying to implement change.

Jagger (1989) supports the following points for teachers' professional development.

1. Teachers need time - time to observe students and one another, and time to read, think about, as well as discuss new ideas from theory and research in order to determine what they mean for curriculum and instruction;
2. Teachers need the freedom to take risks and to experiment with new ideas, materials, techniques, and approaches;

3. Teachers need opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and other professionals on new projects and to develop solutions to common problems;
4. Teachers need real support and assistance - not evaluation and judgment - from administrators, supervisors, and curriculum specialists who know and care about what teachers are trying to do and who can provide informed suggestions about how they might improve; and
5. Most important, teachers need a work environment that is conducive to reflective thinking and that encourages dialogue among professionals who are given the power to act upon their own decisions as curriculum planners. (p. 79)

In the context of Nepal, professional development of the teachers is possible through allowing teachers time for reflective practice and forming a community of learners. The best time to carry out these activities are Friday afternoons because of half-day classes in all the government schools. It would be helpful for the principal or some other resource person to take the role of leadership in creating an atmosphere for the teachers to practice new ideas and provide necessary support whenever the teachers need it.

III METHODS

This chapter presents the research framework, a description of the setting where the research took place, and a description of the research procedures including: (a) organization of the workshops (b) data collection methodologies and (c) data analysis techniques.

Research Design Framework

In this study, a qualitative research paradigm was utilized in order to get the perceptions of the participant teachers, including their insights regarding the reading of storybooks to the children and using expressive writing in the classroom. Qualitative methods also allow the researcher to understand naturally occuring phenomena in their naturally occuring states (Patton, 1990). In this context, Creswell (1994) defined a qualitative study "as an inquiry process of understanding of social or human problems, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting" (p. 2). According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992) qualitative research is an umbrella term that includes research strategies having five characterstics:

1) it has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument;

2) qualitative research is descriptive;

3) researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products;

4) researchers tend to analyze their data inductively; and

5) meaning is of essential concern to the qualitative approach. (p. 9)

Taking into account the statement by Bogdan and Biklen (1990), the researcher felt that it is most suitable to use ethnographic research tools: teacher interviews, classroom observation, teachers reflective journals, and workshops. In order for me to gain a deeper appreciation of the children, the setting, and the task teachers had been asked to do, I also taught in a separate grade one class in a local school for six weeks to gain real experiences in reading stories to young children. I kept my own reflective journal after each class.

With the help of these research tools, the following research questions were investigated:

a) What strengths and weaknesses do the teachers perceive in using the children's literature in the classroom?

b) What changes will the teachers notice in the language behavior of young children after reading a wide variety of literature?

c) What strengths and weaknesses do the teachers perceive in involving the students in journal writing? and

d) What changes do the teachers notice in the students' writing after involving the students in journal writing?

Research Setting

The study took place over a two month period, mid July to mid September 1997, in four public schools of Lalitpur District in Nepal. The main focus of the study was to introduce storybook reading and journal writing in the classroom to develop the emergent literacy of young children. An attempt was also made to enhance the professional development of the teachers by introducing new methods of teaching language arts in their classrooms.

Grade one classes were chosen for the study because pre-primary education was not compulsory in Nepal. In Nepal, the educational services to early age children are primarily managed by private entrepreneurs and non - governmental agencies. The primary education in Nepal comprises grade one to five, of which grade one to three are considered as the basic level. The government has made primary education free of cost with free distribution of textbooks for children enrolled in grade 1-3 and for girls enrolled in grades 4-5 (CERID, 1997).

The major subjects taught in grade one in public schools are Nepali, social studies and math. One teacher does not teach the same class all day, as in North America.

Nepalese teachers tend to teach by subject area across grades. Each class runs for forty-five minutes.

Government policy requires a primary teacher to have a School Leaving Certificate (SLC) as a minimum qualification and also 150 hours of teacher training is required.

The medium of instruction in the general schools is Nepali. The average class size (grade 1-5) is 51 (IEES, 1988). Reflecting on the teaching style of general schools of Nepal IEES study remarks:

> Teachers tend to teach by subject area across grades. The dominant activity in the classroom is teacher lecture punctuated by very brief questions requiring choral "yes" or "no" answers from the students. Teachers tend to interact with the class as a whole rather than with individual students. Learning is basically rote memorization of the alphabet, arithmetic tables, or materials from the textbook. Textbooks are virtually the only instructional materials available. They provide whatever information students are to learn and whatever guidance teachers receive. (p. 4-44)

Physical Facilities

There were four schools originally included in the study. The number was reduced to three after one teacher dropped out. Besides, a local school was chosen to experience the effects of reading storybook and journal writing by the researcher herself. The physical facilities of the schools included in the study are presented below.

School A is situated in the middle of the community. It is a primary school (grade one to five) with no playground. In the grade one classroom, there were no desks

and benches. Students have to sit on mats for reading and writing. The classroom has enough light because of the windows on the east and west side of the classroom. There were two posters posted on the wall.

School B is a lower-secondary school. In this school, classes run from grade one to grade seven. It is situated in the middle of the community. It has a playground. There were attached desks and benches for grade one students which were facing the blackboard. The desks and benches were placed half on the left side and half on the right side so that the teacher can walk through the middle of the classroom. This classroom has not enough sunlight because it has windows on only one side of the classroom with the hallway on the other. Although there is electricity, it is not used during the day.

School C is a secondary girls' school (grade one to ten) which is one of the biggest schools in the city. It has a big playground. There are also attached desks and benches for children in the classroom. The classroom has enough light but there were no posters or children's work displayed on the walls.

The school where I tried out the reading aloud and journal writing, is situated in the middle of the community. It is a lower secondary school (grade one to seven) with a

big playground. There were desks and benches for the children. The classroom has enough sun-light.

Research Procedure

The main strategy of the study was to conduct a series of workshops. The workshops were intended to introduce to a group of teachers a wide variety of children's literature, its importance in the literacy development of young children and its classroom use. During the workshops, I tried to create an environment where participant teachers could reflect on their own teaching in the formal setting. In this regard, Jagger (1989) states that

> "Teachers can help one another to grow, learn, and change through honest, professional dialogue, during which they talk, listen to and challenge one another's ideas in an atmosphere of respect and support" (p. 77).

In this study, professional development of teachers was expected by providing them with the opportunity to use the new methods of teaching Nepali Language Arts throughout the week, and then by giving them a chance to reflect on their own teaching at the Friday workshops. As learning is a social process, teachers need opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and other professionals on new projects and to develop solutions to common problems. I tried to provide such an opportunity to the participant teachers by involving them in the workshops.

A detailed outline of each workshop, containing purposes, content, duration, time framework, and strategies adopted in the workshop, was developed at the University of Alberta. I consulted with my thesis supervisor in this regard before conducting the workshops in Nepal. Necessary changes were made in the workshop outline before actual implementation in the field. The purposes of the workshops were to introduce the primary school teachers to

-a wide variety of children's literature,
-the importance of reading to young children,
-strategies of reading (before, during, and after reading),
-the importance of expressive writing,
-the various activities that can be used for expressive writing,
-the importance of expressive journal writing, and
-ways to access a variety of storybooks for the classroom.

The following steps were carried out to conduct a series of workshops in Lalitpur, Nepal.

Selection of the Teachers

The teachers for the series of workshops were selected from four different primary schools in Lalitpur District. Initially, four teachers teaching at the first grade level

were selected. One of the teachers dropped out after the second workshop because of a death in her extended family.

In order to select the teachers, I visited the schools and explained the purpose of my study to principals. The principals in turn agreed and gave permission for the grade one language teachers to take part in the workshops. I also explained the purpose of the study and time frame to the concerned teachers. Consent forms were given to the teachers after they agreed to take part in the workshop. A copy of the consent form is presented in Appendix A.

Collection of the Books

A wide variety of children's literature was needed for the workshops. My original plan was to use the books produced by the Basic Primary Education Project (BPEP) and the books available in the local market. After meeting with the Nepali language expert in Nepal, I came to know that some schools, private organizations and projects had recently produced some Nepali language children's storybooks. I decided to use those recently published books for the workshops. I visited the following schools, projects, and societies to collect the books.

1. Rato Bangala School
2. Subha Tara School
3. Seto-Gurans Education Society

4. Basic Primary Education Project (BPEP)
5. Nepalese Society for Children's Literature (NESCHIL)
6. Ratna Pustak Bhandar - a local bookstore

Rato Bangala School

Rato Bangala is a private school with English as a medium of instruction. The school has produced two picture books for young children in Nepali language, one poetry book with an audio cassette and a juvenile novel. The names of the picture books are "Mangale Ko Changa" and "Kaa, Kaa, Kauwa." These books are well designed with colorful illustrations. The juvenile novel entitled "Bhgta Prasad Ko Bhyaguto" is written in both an English and a Nepali version.

Subha-Tara School

Subha-Tara is a private school with instruction in English. Through talking with the principal, I came to know that this school has not published any children's books, but they have some books written and illustrated by students. I collected samples of these books to share with the participating teachers.

Seto-Guransh Child Development Center

This center has developed one picture book entitled "Mushi Ko Bihey" which comes with an audio cassette.

Basic Primary Education Project (BPEP)

BPEP which comes under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Nepal, has produced, published and used a variety of children's reading materials in its project schools since 1986. The books produced by the project were distributed to the project schools only. Since then the project has not produced reading material on a regular basis. However, the project had recently published a series of seven picture books. I was able to get two sets of these latest series books for the workshop. I was unable to use any of the books published in 1986 by BPEP as they were out of stock.

Nepalese Society for Children's Literature (NESCHIL)

This is one of the leading agencies in the development of children's literature in Nepal. The Society offers awards to authors and illustrators annually. It organizes conference for teachers, authors and illustrators. It publishes a journal and newsletter from time to time, focusing on the different aspects of children's literature. Currently, it is operating a project called "Books for All." Under this project, they loan books to schools and encourage classroom teachers and parents to read the books for the children. The society has produced eight different genres of picture books. These books were also used in the workshops.

Ratan Pustak Bhandar

Ratna Pustak Bhandar is one of the largest, private bookstores in Nepal which has been publishing children's books for many years. I was able to collect four sets of fifty different types of books produced by the bookstore. The majority of them are chapter storybooks. Some are poetry books and some are folk songs.

Venue of the Workshops

A series of workshops was conducted at Namuna Machhindre Secondary School, Lagankhel which is within walking distance for all the workshop participants.

Duration of the Workshops

A series of workshops was organized on the Friday afternoons as requested by the principals and teachers. On Friday, schools operate for only half a day. Workshops were organized on five Friday afternoons, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. The first workshop was started on August 1st and last one was August 29th 1997.

Workshop Strategies

In the workshops, teachers worked both independently and in a group. Teachers were asked to use the strategies learned in the workshops in their following classes. This

included reading stories with the children, discussions after reading stories and student journal writing.

Reflective Journals

Teachers were asked to write reflective journals after each class. The teachers were asked to include the following points in their reflective journal entries:

-name of the book read to children,

-time the book was read,

-literacy behavior observed when reading stories,

-student reaction while being read to

-questions asked by students while the teacher was reading the storybooks, and

-problems encountered when reading stories

Data Collection

The instruments used for data collection were: (a) Questionnaire (b) Interviews, (c) Class observation (d) Teachers reflective journals and (e) Teaching in a local school.

Questionnaire

I used the questionnaire in the beginning of the workshop to get the teachers' background information, student's background information and to get a general idea of methods of teaching Nepali Language Arts. In the

questionnaire, both open ended and closed ended questions were used. A copy of the questionnaire (English version) is presented in Appendix B.

Interviews

After the completion of the workshop, I interviewed two teachers using a questionnaire outline to collect their experiences about reading storybooks and using journal writing in the classroom. The copy of the questionnaire (English version) is presented in Appendix C. The questionnaire helped me to carry out the interviews in a systematic and consistent manner for each respondent. It took me about 45 minutes to complete each interview. After the interviews, I reflected in my reflective journal about the responses made by each participant.

Class Observation

I observed the classes of each teacher participant regularly (once a week) until the end of the workshops. It was an announced visit. I was there as a participant observer, and I kept field notes regarding the teachers' reading behavior and students' interactions with the teacher. I audiotaped one class of storybook reading by each teacher. I demonstrated in the classroom model lessons of storybook reading, whenever I felt necessary. After the class, I would have a discussion with the teacher regarding

her storybook reading style and students' interactions with her. I provided feedback to the teacher on the positive points and some of the points she might need to improve in her next class.

Teachers' Reflective Journal

At the beginning the second day of the workshops, teachers handed their reflective journal entries to me. I read their journal entries and responded to support their ideas. I added my own thoughts about the strengths they had identified in reading storybooks to young children. At the end of their journal entries, I highlighted major points they had written in their journals. I also commented on their journal entries in nonevaluative ways to encourage them to do further writing.

The teachers were provided with a chance to reflect on their own teaching (reflective practice) through reflective journal writing and sharing of their experiences in a community of learners (forming of a support group). Continuous feedback was also provided to the teachers for support and implementation of new ideas in teaching Language Arts in the general schools of Nepal.

As I read their journal entries, I jotted down in my notebook, the points related to the importance of reading storybooks and children's literacy behavior. I returned the

journal books at the beginning of each weekend so that they could make their new entries during the week. At the end of the workshops, I took the original journals from the teachers promising to give them back after completing the data analysis.

Teaching in a Local School

I found teaching a grade one class very helpful to gain my own insights into the effects of reading to young children. This helped me to interact with the participant teachers and to support the ideas and feelings expressed by the teachers in the workshops.

Data Analysis

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992), qualitative data can be analyzed during the field work and after data collection. Given below are the brief descriptions of data analysis during the field work and after field work.

During Field Work

The strengths of reading stories to young children were identified by the teachers during the course of workshops. They also identified some weaknesses while reading stories to young children. In the same way they identified the strengths and weakness of students' journaling in the classroom. I also kept records of emerging themes during

class observations, during discussions in the workshops, and arising from the teachers reflective journals.

After Data Collection

After data collection, I transcribed the audiotaped interviews of the teachers. I was able to send the transcripts back to the teachers in Nepal for further comments and reactions in the December, 1997. I received the transcripts back from them, with some additions, in the last week of February 1998. From this interview data, I analyzed the emerging themes.

With the help of field notes and transcript of audio tapes, class observations were analyzed in terms of classroom setting, teachers' story reading behaviors and students' interaction.

Teachers' reflective journal entries were analyzed in terms of: time spent in reading storybooks, strengths and weakness identified in reading stories and in journal writing.

Ethical Considerations

The anonymity of the respondents was protected at all times through the use of pseudonyms. Written consent was obtained from each participant teacher before starting the workshops and interviews.

Approval for this study was obtained from the Department of Elementary Education Ethics Review committee, University of Alberta.

Summary

This chapter has presented the research framework and research procedures. Chapter IV presents the day by day descriptions of the workshops.

IV DAY-BY-DAY DESCRIPTIONS OF THE WORKSHOPS

This chapter presents the detailed descriptions of the day by day contents and the activities carried out in the workshops. The workshop was facilitated by the researcher and the participants of the workshop were primary school teachers who were teaching in grade one. As mentioned earlier, the workshops took place at a local school on Friday afternoons.

First Day of the Workshop

The workshop began with the introduction of the participant teachers. Each teacher was asked to provide the following information:

-Name,

-The school they came from,

-How long they had been teaching,

-How did they become teachers,

-What did they like most about teaching and

-What did they not like about teaching.

Based on the above information, presented below are the three stories of the participant teachers.

Story No. 1 (Story of Chameli)

Chameli, a participant in the workshop, was from a local lower secondary school. She was teaching language arts in the nursery and grade one classrooms. She was

teaching social studies in grade six and seven. She has been teaching in the same school for twelve years. She did not address any specific reasons for choosing the teaching job, although she mentioned that in the beginning of her career she was not determined to be a teacher. Later she came to understand what it was to be a teacher. So she decided to be a teacher. She even pointed out that she liked this job very much. She liked most to be with the kids and she enjoyed reading different subject matters from the textbooks before teaching in the classroom. The problem she had encountered with her teaching, was to face the challenge of large class sizes with different age groups in the same class and lack of instructional materials. She had a positive attitude towards her teaching.

Story No. 2 (Story of Kamala)

Kamala, a participant in the workshop, was from the local primary school where she taught language arts in grade one, grade three and five. She had been teaching in the same school for eight years. She had wanted to be a teacher since she was a kid. It seemed that her ambition to be a teacher had been fulfilled. She liked the social recognition of the teaching job in the society. In her classroom she had students from different ethnic backgrounds, whose first languages were not Nepali. The

presence of non-Nepali speaking students was the greatest challenge for her. She explained that the lack of regular attendance of the students was also a pertinent problem.

Story No. 3 (Story of Geeta)

Teacher Geeta, a participant in the workshop, was from a girls' secondary school. She taught language arts in grade one, grade two and grade three. She had been teaching in the school for eight years. Her aunt was also a teacher. She was inspired by her to become a teacher. She even expressed that she wanted to serve the community by being the teacher of a local school. She liked to try different methods of teaching that she had learned from her training program. She did not mention any specific problems regarding her teaching.

Story No. 4 (Researcher's Own Story)

Theoretically, I have learned a lot about the importance of reading stories to children and involving children in journal writing. I would like to learn a lot about the practical implications of reading stories to young children in the society like Nepal where there is the culture of oral story-telling. I would also like to see children's literacy behavior during story reading and involving them in journal writing. As I am working with the

group of teachers, I would like to support their ideas with some evidence.

Teacher Questionnaire

After the teachers' stories, I distributed a questionnaire to each teacher. The main purpose of the questionnaire was to find out what activities were used by the language arts teachers in grade one for teaching reading and writing. The questionnaire also focused on the information related to

-Teaching Experiences,
-Training,
-Qualifications,
-Number of students in the class (including boys and girls),
-Major content taught in the class,
-Major activities carried out in language arts class, and
-Major problems, issues or concerns in language arts class.

Purpose, Content and Methodology of the Workshop

The purpose, content and methodology of the workshop were explained to the teachers as has described in Chapter III.

Importance of Reading to Young Children

There was approximately an hour long discussion in Nepali language on the importance of reading to the young

children. First of all, I asked them "Do you read any storybooks to children besides the prescribed textbooks?" All the teacher replied that they do not read any storybooks besides the textbooks. They read the story which is in the textbook. Then I added one more question: "Why do you think reading storybooks is important to young children?" Following are the replies of the teachers:

Chameli: "As I read the story the children will know what the story is about."

Kamala: "Children will learn the moral of the story."

Geeta: "Children will know about the characters of the story."

After getting these points from the teachers, I explained the following importance of reading to young children in Nepali language. Each point I jotted down on the blackboard in the Nepali language and I tried to explain as simply as I could with appropriate examples.

Following are the points I discussed with the teachers.

1. Book Handling and Knowledge

The children will know about

-title, title page, author, illustrator,

-hold book right side up, turn page front to back and children will know about front page and back page.

2. Concepts About Print

-print evokes meaning,

-directionality,

-word,

-letter,

-sentence,

-period, and

-question mark.

3. Interest in Books and Reading

-demonstrates interest in listening to stories,

-shows pleasure in reading independently,

-engages in talk about books and stories,

-requests favorite books to be read aloud, and

-views self as a reader

4. Comprehension

-demonstrate predicting and confirming,

-demonstrate sequence of events in a familiar story,

-compare and contrast books,

-understand main idea of book (the book is about...),

-understand cause and effect in a familiar story, and

-understand the book language.

5. Summary

-reading is enjoyable as well as educational,

-learning to read is a means towards the goal of becoming a lifelong reader, and

-develops a sense of community in the classroom

6. Research Implications

-children who learn to read early are ones who have been read to,

-children's language development is enriched by exposure to literature,

-children's later educational achievement is related to early experience of listening to stories.

Selection of Children's Story Books

The teachers were asked to browse through the books which were displayed on the table. They were also asked to select the books of their choice or interest for their classroom use.

Tea Break

The teachers were given a tea break in the workshop.

Strategy of Reading the Books

I explained the strategies of reading focused on, before reading, during reading and after reading. I adopted these strategies from Mason, Peterman, and Kerr (1989). The following are the strategies that I explained to teachers and jotted down on the blackboard.

1. Before Reading

. Show the cover of the book to the children. Encourage predictions of the book's content;

. Discuss the book's author and illustrator;

. Allow children to discuss their own experiences that are related to those in the book;

. Discuss the type of text the children will be hearing;

. Introduce children to the main character and setting; and

. Set a purpose for the children to listen to the story.

2. During Reading

. Encourage children to react to and comment on the story as they listen;

. Elaborate on the text, when appropriate, in order to help children understand the written language used in the story and the critical story components;

. Ask questions occasionally to monitor children's comprehension of the story;

. Rephrase the text when it is apparent that children do not understand the ideas;

. At appropriate points in the story, ask children to predict what might happen next and

. Allow children to voice their own interpretations of the story.

3. After Reading

. Review the story components (setting, problem, goal, resolution);

. Help children make connections between events involving the main character and similar events in their lives; and

. Engage children in a follow up activity that involves thinking and the text. (p. 57)

Demonstration of a Story Book Reading

I demonstrated a story book reading based on the previously outlined strategies.

Reflective Journal

Teachers were asked to write reflective journals after each class. The reasons for keeping reflective journals and what to mention in the journals were also discussed.

At the end of the first day of the workshop, the teachers were asked to bring their reflective journals back to the next workshop to share their reflections with the participants. They were also informed that I would visit their classes periodically to observe them reading to children. I also stressed the importance of regular attendance by all research participants. Remuneration for attending workshops was also discussed. The participant teachers were paid at the end of the workshops. In Nepal, there is a practice of giving remuneration to the participants in the workshop.

Second Day of the Workshop

The second day of the workshop was started with the following activities:

1. Name Game

In the name game the teachers were asked to share the meaning and significance of their names.

2. Sharing of Picture Books and a Poem Book

I shared one picture book which is called "Mangale Ko Changa" and some poems from the book entitled "Balbatika".

3. Sharing of the Teachers' Reflective Journal

Each teacher came with three reflective journal entries. They were asked to share one journal entry of their choice. After, there was a group discussion of their experiences.

4. Identifications of Strengths and Weakness in Reading Stories to Young Children

The teachers were asked to make a list of all the positive aspects of reading stories to their students. They were then asked to discuss these points in a group. After discussion, the group came up with a list of strengths. The same process was carried out in identifying the problems while reading stories to young children. The following are the strengths of reading storybooks identified by the participant teachers in the second day of workshop:

a. Reading storybooks in the class helps to develop listening ability of the students;

b. Reading storybooks involves students in picture discussions and question answer activities. These activities help students to develop their speaking ability;

c. Reading storybooks helps students to develop a habit of listening to stories. They showed great interest and desire towards listening to stories;

d. Reading storybooks develops the critical thinking power of students. In storybook reading, students were asked to express their thought about what is happening in the picture. They were also asked to predict what will happen in the story based on that illustration;

e. Students were able to retell the story in part or whole after listening to the storybook read by the teacher. This will enhance their comprehension ability;

f. Students will develop new vocabulary from storybooks read to them. This happens as they come across new words in the right or appropriate context. Such opportunity will help the students to build new vocabularies;

g. Storybook reading provides fun, excitement to the students; and

h. Reading storybooks helps to control large classes as students listen to teachers reading storybooks with great curiosity and interest.

The following are the problems identified by the participants while reading storybooks in the classroom.

. Most of the storybooks published by the local publisher contained many difficult and abstract words which are not suitable to the grade one level;

. Most stories are too long to finish reading in a forty-five minutes class; and

. Most storybooks available on the market contained few illustrations.

5. Tea Break

The teachers were given tea break in the workshop.

6. Demonstration Lesson

On the second day of workshop, I read a story using the steps I had discussed on the first day of workshop. The main purpose of the demonstration lesson this day was to make teachers more familiar with the various steps of reading storybooks. The demonstration was followed by group discussion.

7. Book Selection

Teachers were asked to browse through and collect the books which were displayed on the table for their classroom use. This time I asked them to take some poetry books in order to get their experiences on reading poems.

8. Class Observation

To see how the teachers read the stories in the classroom and how the students interacted while the teacher

read the storybook, classroom observation was needed. Time for class observation was arranged for the next week.

9. Teachers' Reflective Journal Entries

I collected participant teachers' reflective journals to:

-see how they perceived the strengths and weakness of reading storybooks to the children,

-see how they had adjusted the process of reading storybooks in their regular classroom, and

-respond to their journals.

10. Show and Tell

With an intention of introducing the concept and importance of show and tell in the classroom, I asked the participant teachers to bring five items for show and tell for the next day of workshop.

Third Day of Workshop

The third day workshop started with show and tell.

1. Show and Tell

The Show and Tell activity was carried out by two participant teachers and by myself. After this activity I asked the group to list down the strengths in carrying out show and tell in the classroom.

The following strengths were identified by the teachers after group discussions:

-Children get a chance to show and talk about something brought from home. This activity gives the students an opportunity to speak before the class;
-Students learn to develop the habit of discussion in a logical sequence;
-Students learn to listen and ask questions of the speaker. In the same way the speaker develops confidence in answering the questions;
-Each student gets a chance to volunteer in this activity, so the students will learn to take turns; and
-Children in the classroom might get a chance to know something new which they were not familiar with before.

After the above discussion, I suggested that the participant teachers make some rules for using show and tell in the classroom. Some of the simple rules could be:
-have a specific chair for the presenter or speaker,
-remind the students to bring the items ahead of time,
-limit one or two items to bring,
-children should raise their hands to ask the questions, and
-limit one question per each student.

2. Readback

I asked the teachers to read what they had written in their journal. They were also asked to add further entries about the strength and weakness of reading storybooks to

students if they needed to. They added the following points:

-students were able to draw some pictures based on stories read to them,

-students had learned the good moral behaviors, and

-the imaginative power of the students will be developed.

3. Researchers' Response on Teacher's Journal

I presented what I found in the teachers' reflective journals. Basically, I focused on:

-what was in common,

-what strengths and weakness they mentioned, and

-the personal feelings mentioned

4. Class Observation

I talked briefly about what I discovered during class observation.

5. Sharing of the Experiences

I asked the teachers to share their experiences in reading stories to young children. This activity gave the teachers an opportunity to talk about what they did and what they found.

6. Identification of Strengths and Weakness in Reading Stories

The list of strengths and weakness about reading storybooks which they had prepared on the second day of workshop was distributed to each teacher. They were asked

to add any additional strengths and weaknesses that they experienced in the classroom. The following strengths were added:

-Storybook reading developed students' imagination power,
-Students requested the teachers to read more storybooks,
-Students were able to differentiate between good and bad characters in the story,
-Students could predict what will happen in the story by looking at the pictures, and
-Students developed the power to reflect on the result of the story.

Regarding the problems of reading stories, the participant teachers pointed out the presence of difficult words in the book.

7. *Tea Break*

Teachers were given tea break in the workshop.

8. *Importance of Students' Journal Writing*

To introduce the importance of students' journal writing, I asked the participant teachers to talk about the writing activities they had been doing in their classroom. The two major writing activities, they had been doing were copying and using the words in sentences. In the copying exercise, the students were asked to copy the letters and words from the textbook to their own exercise copy. In the exercise "use of the words in sentences", the students had

to choose the appropriate words from the given three words, to complete the sentences. I gave the teachers an example of free writing "what did you see in Mattya a local festival held last week." The participant teachers wrote a brief description of the festival. I showed them the sample copy of the same activities done by the students in the class I had been teaching. The teachers realized that the students can write even a full sentence. The teachers noticed the difference between the activities they had been doing and free writing. The teachers expressed that in free writing, there was a chance to freely write what they felt and it gave further chance to think about what to write.

I then added the following importance of journal writing in the classroom:

a. Journals offer a powerful way to assess student knowledge at the higher levels of learning.

b. Journals provide for self-exploration and self-discovery.

c. Journals encourage students to think and require an articulation of their thoughts.

d. Journals make education personal.

e. Journals improve writing. (Isaacs & Brodine, 1994, p. 13).

9. Journal Writing Techniques

To introduce student journaling, teachers were asked to use the following techniques (activities) as an example:

-Draw your picture and write your name,

-Draw your family members and write their names,

-What did you do on the weekend?

-How did you celebrate the festival? and

-Write a journal entry about the recent field trip.

10. Teachers' Reflective Journal

Teachers were asked to keep reflective journals on students' journaling as well. For the next workshop, teachers were requested to bring samples of student journaling for the purpose of sharing. They were asked to continue with journal entries on reading stories to young children.

Fourth Day of the Workshop

The fourth day of the workshop was started by reading a childrens' story to the group.

1. Presentations on Teachers' Reflective Journals

A brief overview of what I found on teachers' journal was presented. For example, the teachers had written the title, author and illustrator of the book they read in the classroom. The teachers had mentioned the following strengths of reading storybooks to students.

-Students were very attentive in listening stories,

-Students were involved in picture discussions so class participation was higher than before, and

-Students got an opportunity to learn new vocabulary.

In the same manner, the teachers made mention of some of the words which the grade one students had difficulty with.

2. Presentations on Class Observation

Summary of my classroom observations were also discussed. For example, all the teachers read the title of the storybook and author and illustrator of the book. Teachers also asked the questions related to prediction in the story. During reading, teachers explained the meaning of the words students had difficulty with. The teachers also read the story with facial expressions and expressed some words aloud when there was something exciting happening. At the end of the story, the teachers asked questions like, what did you learn from the story? What happened to the bad character? What would you do in such a situation?

Some of the activities that could be carried out at the end of the story were also discussed. For example, students could draw some pictures of the story. They could tell the part of the story they like.

3. Sharing of Journals

I asked teachers to share their reflections on student journaling. During this sharing, they focused on:

-the types of activities in student journaling,

-what strengths did they observed in journal writing, and

-problems encountered while letting students keep journals

4. Identification of Strengths and Weakness in Journal Writing

The following are the strengths identified by the participant teachers in student journaling.

a. It set the habit of writing.

b. The students were good in drawing pictures of an event they had observed,

c. Students tried to describe the pictures in words and sentences although the words and sentences were not always correct, and

d. Teachers understood the students' writing ability.

Regarding weaknesses in journal writing, the participant teachers did not identify any specific weaknesses, however they expressed that the students were hesitant to write at first. According to the teachers, the students were even hesitant to draw the pictures. The teachers had to first demonstrate how to write in a journal. Through modeling, the students were able to carry out the journal writing for the first time. By the second class, students felt comfortable in writing journals.

5. Adding Some Strengths and Weakness of Reading Stories to Children

The participant teachers added the following three points as the strengths of reading stories to the children:

a. Students learn different types of sentence structure.

b. Storybook reading helped in creating student centered teaching as it involved students in various activities.

c. Students became acquainted with different plots, settings of the story.

6. Participatory Ranking

After identifying the strengths and weaknesses, the teachers were asked individually to assign a number for each strength. Instruction was given to weight the most important with a 5, the second with a 4, and so on. My job was to tally the strengths as marked by the teachers and record it on the cardboard and inform the teachers. The teachers were agreed on what they have marked. The strengths and weakness of reading stories as marked by the teachers are presented in Chapter V.

The same process was applied in the participatory ranking of the strengths and weaknesses of journal writing. A list of strengths and weaknesses is presented in Chapter V.

7. Exploration on Ways to Access a Variety of Storybooks for the Classroom

After reading storybooks for four weeks, the participant teachers expressed the need for childrens' storybooks in their classroom. We discussed the idea of having a classroom library. How to get books for the

classroom library was the main problem. We discussed some of the sources to get the books from possible sources. The following are the discussions carried out in exploring the ways to get the books:

a. Participant teachers agreed to request the principals of their schools to buy some books,

b. The teachers indicated that they could request the parents bring at least one book for the classroom,

c. They were going to write request letters to some agencies and projects that had produced children storybooks. I gave them the names and addresses of the all the agencies that I had visited to collect the books for the workshop, and

d. I recommended that they visit the Nepalese Society for Children Literature because they produce and provide books to schools on a loan basis.

Fifth Day of Workshop

The fifth day of the workshop was not part of the origional plan. A fifth day of the workshop was organized at the teachers' request. On that day the teachers' decided to copy the strengths and weaknesses of reading stories to young children and journal writing with young children on the big cardboard as an outcome of the workshop. Prior to their doing that, the points were edited by a Nepali language expert before copying on the cardboard. They

expressed their willingness to have it posted in their classrooms and in the teachers' staff room.

Final thoughts on the workshops were presented by each teacher.

Summary

The detailed descriptions of content and activities of the workshops, sharing of the teacher's reflection journals, teachers' experiences, sharing of journals have presented in this chapter. Strengths and weakness of reading storybooks and journaling in the classroom were also presented.

The next chapter will address the following questions:

-how did the participant teachers use the storybook in their classrooms?

-what did they feel about using storybooks in the classroom?

-what literacy behaviour did they noticed after reading storybooks?

-How did the teachers use journal writing activities?

-What did they feel about using journal writing in the classroom?

V FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the study. The findings of the study are presented under the following four major headings:

(a) Storybook reading

(b) Journal writing

(c) Reflections on the class I taught

(d) Professional development of the teachers or changes noticed by the teachers in their teaching.

Given below are the detailed descriptions of each point and the sub-points under each major heading.

Storybook Reading

Storybook reading in the classroom is a new idea or new strategy of teaching to those teachers who were involved in the study. The teachers began to read storybooks after the first workshop. As provided by the researcher, they used different genres of storybooks. For example, animal storybooks, alphabet storybooks, folk stories, fairy tales, poetry books and picture books. Most of the picture books used were in black and white, as there are very few colored picture books available in Nepal.

Under storybook reading in the classroom, the sub-points that emerged were:

(a) Teachers' storybook reading behavior in the classroom,

(b) Literacy behavior noticed by the teachers,

(c) Teachers' attitudes towards reading storybooks in the classroom,

(d) Use of storybooks in the classroom, and

(e) Participatory ranking of the strengths and weaknesses of reading storybooks.

Teachers' Storybook Reading Behavior

Since the teachers were reading storybooks in the classroom for the first time it is necessary to see how they read the books. Some of my concerns were: (a) are they following the steps of reading storybooks as I had been discussed in the workshop? (b) are they reading storybooks in the big group, in small group or individually? (c) what does a typical day looks like for a teacher while reading storybooks? (d) how did students behave while teachers read storybooks?

To address all of the above concerns, I observed the classroom of each participating teacher from time to time while they were reading stories in the classroom. I used the field notes on classroom observations and an audiotape of the storybook reading in this task. I analyzed the storybook reading by the teachers, focusing on the "before reading stories", "during reading stories" and "after

reading stories" strategies. Following are the discussions on teacher's story reading behavior.

Steps Followed by the Teachers While Reading Storybooks

All of the teachers stood in front of the class to read the storybook because of the classroom structure. Sometimes the teachers walked through the middle of the class to show the pictures. In the case of a classroom where there was a mat, the teacher also sat with the students on the floor.

Before reading the story all the teachers carried out the picture discussions. Most of the time picture discussions were followed by asking students what they saw in the picture and asking for the predictions about the name of the story. It was also noticed that the teacher read the title first and carried out the picture discussions and asked the students about the possible characters of the story.

Teachers read the names of the author and illustrator before reading stories. They tended to forget to read the name of the authors if they read the story from the previously read chapter storybooks.

The teachers read the storybook with facial expressions, and sometimes modified their voices to give emphasis. After reading a paragraph, all the teachers tended to stop and made further elaboration. It was also

noticed that teachers asked the students questions from time to time during reading. Sometimes questions were asked to make sure that students understood what was being read. They also asked questions to let students predict what would happen in the story. Explanations of difficult vocabulary were also given.

After reading the story, the teachers asked questions of the students about whether they liked the story. They also asked questions in order to review the content. Most of the time the teachers asked the questions such as "what did they learn from the story?" Follow up activities such as "Draw a turtle", and "draw your favorite parts of the story" were also noticed in some classes.

Storybook Reading in Big Group/Small Group

All the teachers read stories in the big group. None of them read storybooks in small groups or to individual students. This was because of the classroom structure. The teachers had to engage the whole class and found it hard to carry out storybook reading in small groups or individually.

Scenario of Miss Chameli (a typical day of teacher Chameli)

a. Before reading the stories

As soon as, Teacher Chameli entered the classroom, students said, Good morning, Miss.

Chameli: Good morning class and how are you this morning?

Students: We are fine Miss and how are you?

Chameli: I am fine how are you class.

Class: We are fine, Thank you Miss.

The above conversation was in English. This type of English conversation in public schools was unusual or rare in Nepal.

Chameli: I am going to start to-day's class by reading a story, which story you want to read?

Students: Mangele Ko Changa.

Students: Mushi Ko Bihe.

Students: A new story, Miss.

Chameli: OK! OK! I am going to read a new story. Look at the pictures. What did you see in the picture?

Students: A turtle, Miss!

Students: Two flying birds!

Chameli: Can any one say the name of these flying birds? (Showing the pictures)

Students: Looks duck, Miss!

Chameli: Try once more.

Students: Bakula, Miss!

Chameli: Yes, these are bakulas. OK! You have seen a turtle and a bakula, What do you think this story is about?

Students: About Bakula and turtle Miss!

Chemeli: Yes! This story is about a turtle and Bakulas. The title of the story is "Gaphadi Bakula." (Miss Chameli reads the author and illustrator of the story. She further asks the class: do you know what is the meaning of Gaphadi? And she explains the meaning of "Gaphadi".)

Chameli: Class! I am going to read this story. You all listen carefully, then you will know why the turtle is called "Gaphadi" and I will ask some questions at the end.

Reflections. Before, reading the story, Chameli provided an opportunity for the students to choose the storybook. According to Morrow (1997), providing children with the opportunity to make choices about which literacy task they will participate in gives them the responsibility and control over the situation. Chameli read the title, author and illustrator of the story. She discussed the title of story to make clear what the story is about. She let the class discuss the pictures of the story and carried out the prediction activities with the students. She even identified the characters that were going to be in the story. Pre-reading discussions are very important in reading storybooks. They prepare the children to read by using their existing knowledge as a background to reading a

text (Mcdonald, 1991). Another important point which I found interesting was that Chameli set a goal for the reading. She set the goal by saying "Listen carefully, so that you will know why the turtle is called 'Gaphadi' and I will ask some questions."

b. During Reading the Stories

During reading the storybook, Miss Chameli read the story at a good slow pace. She read a few lines and explained the difficult words. She further interpreted the written text in order to clarify the meaning for the students. She turned the pages and linked the picture with the text. She used the pictures as a vehicle to predict the text and asked the students what was going to happen. During reading, one of the students linked his own experience with the text. She agreed with the student and showed approval to the student. She asked questions of the students. Here are some examples:

Chameli: How did the turtle get the stick?

Students: An old man gave him.

Chameli: What did the Bakula say to the turtle?

Students: Hold the stick so that we can take you to the Tarai.

Chameli: Yes! She continued reading the storybook.

Reflections. During the reading of the storybook, Chameli read the story slowly and modified her voice to emphasize the words. Chameli explained the difficult vocabulary as well. Chameli further monitored the students' understanding by asking them some questions. She let the students associate the text with their experiences in some of the texts. She elaborated the text after reading a paragraph.

c. After Reading the Stories

After the storybook reading, teacher Chameli asked the class whether they liked this story?

Chameli: Do you like this story?

Students: We like it Miss.

Chameli: What did you learn from this story?

Students: One has to follow what he or she was told to do so.

Chameli: Yes! That is right! What else did you learn from the story?

Students: One has to listen to elders.

Chameli: That is right. You have to listen to elders and you have to do any work according to what you are told to do. And I want you to draw the favorite part of the story and write few lines about it.

Reflections. In Nepal, after telling the story, the story teller generally askes the questions: "what did you learn from the story." The same pattern is carried out by this teacher. She did engage the children in a follow up activity by asking the class to draw and write the favorite part of the story.

d. Reflections on Students While Teacher was Reading Storybooks

The reading of stories in the classroom by the teacher was new to these students. They were very good listeners. They were very excited to listen to the story read by their teachers. They could ask the teacher to read the story of their own preference.

Illustrations play a very important role in the storybook reading. Students were very excited to see the pictures. They were able to predict what might happen from the pictures.

They were able to associate the story text with their experiences. According to Strickland and Taylor (1986) listening to and responding to books is viewed as vital resources for building background knowledge, fostering language development, linking reading to writing, developing a sense of story and building positive attitudes about books and print.

Students differentiated between good characters and bad characters of the story. They also identified their favorite parts of the story with drawings.

They liked the picture books a lot. They also liked to listen to stories that had no illustration.
High participation of the students was noticed in discussions in the classroom.

Literacy Behaviors of Children

The following are the literacy behaviors identified by the teachers in their journal entries:

1. Students sat very quietly and listened to the story very attentively while it was being read;
2. Students were good at predicting what would happen in the story based on the title of the story;
3. Students actively took part in picture discussions;
4. Students were very happy and excited when the teachers talked about the pictures;
5. Shy students took part in picture discussions and in answering questions;
6. Curiosity is another behavior of students that the teachers mentioned very often in their journal. According to the teachers, students were very curious to look at the pictures and to hear what would happen in the story. According to Burke (1990), curiosity of the young child is a

powerful force, it propels young children to marvel, query, investigate, and discover;

7. Students vocabularies increased as a result of reading stories;

8. Students became familiar with the new sentence structure;

9. Students connected the story setting with the school experiences and their daily life experiences;

10. Students expressed various feelings while listening to the story. The expressions noted were: curiosity, excitement, surprise and sympathy;

11. Students could differentiate between the poems and stories;

12. Students asked to have more storybooks read;

13. Their comprehension ability increased;

14. Students were able to identify the different characters in the stories; and

15. Students were very happy when the teacher allowed them to choose the storybooks.

Attitude of Teachers Toward Reading Stories

An attempt was made to find out the attitude of teachers toward reading stories in the classroom. Previously, they thought that their main job was to teach students how to read and write the letters of the alphabet as well as use the activities prescribed in the textbook.

They were more concerned about trying to cover the curriculum. After the workshops, and after allowing them to use the story books in their classroom, all the teachers realized the importance of reading to young children. The following are the changes in their attitudes noticed from their reflective journal entries and discussions at the workshops and interview:

1. "I have been using only the prescribed textbook for my class. I used to carry out the activities which are in the textbook. Once in a while I used to tell stories to my students. I know for sure my students like to listen to stories. Sometimes, they request me to tell the stories. But I am tired of telling stories, because I have no more stories to tell. I already told all the stories I knew. Now, I am very happy that I can read different stories to my students. I have a school library. I can borrow the books from the school library." Miss Chameli made this statement on the second day of workshop.

2. "I have forty students in my class. Each day it takes me quite a few minutes to control the class before I begin the lesson. Since I started reading stories, I found it very easy to control my class. The students just asked me to read the story when I entered the classroom. I feel that my time is well utilized and as a teacher I am very happy to

see the students enjoying reading." (Miss Chameli, Journal entry date August 13, 1997)

3. "I got different types of books from the workshop. My colleague teachers were very excited to see these books. I talked with my teacher friends about the significance of reading stories to children. They were also fascinated by the idea and they also read stories in their classrooms. The importance of reading stories is realized by my colleagues as well. (Miss Kamala expressed on the second day of workshop)

4. "I got story books to read in grade one. I teach Nepali language in grade two and three as well. I read stories to my grade two and three students. It was just perfect. They enjoyed listening to stories as well. So I have been reading stories in grade one, two and three." (expressed on the second day of workshop by Miss Geeta)

As soon as Miss Geeta completed her statement Miss Chameli added, "I read stories to my nursery classes but it did not work out as in grade one. She further added the students are small and there were nearly sixty students in the class. Miss Kamala added,"I read stories to the grade three and four students but it really worked well. The students were so quiet and eager to know what would be the end of the story."

5. "I got different types of books from the workshop. As I was reading a book about eating healthy foods, I realized that I read the books to introduce new concepts and ideas. I used the examples from the book. It was a really good idea." (Journal entry of Miss Geeta, August 21, 1997)

6. "I have not read the stories to my children before in the classroom. As I began to read the stories in my class, I realized that it can be used as one of the teaching methods in language arts. I found that my students listened to the story very attentively and took part in the question answer discussions. Through story reading, the listening and the speaking ability of the students will be enhanced." (A statement made by Miss Kamala in an interview)

7. "Besides picture books, I read some books which were related to the good manners. I am sure my students will learn good manners through these stories. I feel that stories can be used to teach good manners in the classroom." (Journal entry of Miss Kamala, August 21, 1997)

Use of Storybooks

1. The journal entries indicated that teachers read storybooks not only in their grade one classes, but also to their grade two and three classes. They were very happy to share the news that grade two and grade three students were very happy to have story reading in the classroom.

2. It was found that two teachers had fully used their class of 45 minutes in reading storybooks whereas one teacher used half the time for storybook reading and half of the time for her regular teaching.

3. The teachers indicated in the journals that they had read the stories themselves two or three times before going to read in the classroom.

4. It was interesting to learn the reasons why teachers selected the particular storybooks. According to them, the purposes stated in selecting the books were:

-to have students experience fun with reading the books,

-to have students associate the letters of the alphabet with pictures,

-to provide students with information about different subject matter, and

-to teach morals and values to the students

It was also noted that the teachers sometimes selected the books because of its simple language and pictures. Some books were selected because of relevance to the subject content.

5. The teachers noted the title and the author of the storybooks read to the students in all of the journal entries. The illustrators of the storybooks were not mentioned in all the journal entries.

6. In all the journal entries the teachers noted the questions they asked before, during and after reading the storybooks as learnt in the workshops.

7. It was interesting to note that all the teachers had asked the question "What did you learn from the story"?

8. One teacher allowed students to chose the book that they wanted the teacher to read.

Strengths of Reading Storybooks to Young Children According to the Participatory Ranking

1. Reading storybooks in the class helps to develop listening abilities of the students.

2. Reading storybooks involves students in picture discussions as well as question and answer activities. These activities help students to develop their speaking ability.

3. Reading storybooks helps students to develop a habit of listening to stories. They showed a great interest and desire in listening to stories.

4. Reading storybooks to students develops the critical thinking power of students.

5. Students were able to retell the story as a part or whole after listening to the story read by the teachers. This will enhance their recall ability.

6. Students develop new vocabulary by having storybooks read to them.

7. Reading storybook helps to control large classes as students listen to teachers reading the story with great curiosity and interest.

8. Students are able to differentiate between good characters and bad characters.

9. Students gain the concept of moral behaviors.

10. Storybook reading develops student's imagination power.

11. Storybook reading provides fun, excitement to the students.

12. Students request the teachers to read more storybooks.

13. Students learn different types of sentence structure.

14. Students know the various subject matter in different situations through reading different genres of storybooks.

15. Storybook reading helps in creating student centered teaching as it involves students in various activities.

16. Students are able to predict what will happen in the story.

17. Students can associate their daily experiences with the story.

18. Students develop the power to reflect on the result of the story.

Problems Identified by Teachers While Reading Storybooks in the Classroom

1. Most storybooks contain few illustrations. There is a lack of colored illustrations.
2. Some storybooks contain difficult words and or abstract words which are not suitable to the grade one level.
3. Some stories are too long to finish reading in a forty-five minutes class.
4. The setting and plot of some stories are too imaginary for the grade one children.

Journal Writing in the Classroom

The teachers involved in the study carried out different techniques of journal writing in their classrooms as we discussed in the workshop. This section presents:

-different techniques used by teachers in journal writing,
-writing behavior observed by the teachers,
-strengths observed by the teachers in using journal writing,
-problems identified by the teachers in using journal writing,
-change in attitudes of teachers after using journal writing, and
-suggestions for further implementation of journal writing.

Activities Carried out by the Teachers

All the journal writing activities were carried out in Nepali language. The teachers used the following activities in their classroom.

-Draw your face and sign your name,

-Draw your family members and write who they are,

-What did you do on the weekend? Draw in pictures and write in words,

-Write down how did you spend your morning hours before you came to school,

-How did you celebrate father's day?

-Draw what you saw in the festival Mattaya and write down in words that you have drawn. (Mattaya is a local festival during which some people dresses in costumes. Some people carry lighted candles and walks in a big procession. The processions take places in the major places of Latitpur district).

-Draw the favorite parts of the story and write in words, and

-Listing - list the use of water in our daily life.

Discussion

I discussed the importance and different activities of using journal writing in the workshop. I also showed them some of the samples of journal writing from the class where

I taught. The above activities were developed and implemented in their classrooms by the teachers. It is good to see that journaling techniques were related to the students' and family. These activities were even associated with social events in which the students took part. It gave students an opportunity to reflect on what they observed, what they did and what they liked and disliked. On the other hand, the teachers got an opportunity to know each student personally. It is good to give some topics to write for the students in journal writers. According to Isaacs and Brodine (1994) after students gain experience in journaling and become more confident, they tend to write more often on topics of their own.

Writing Behaviors Observed by the Teachers

Prior to introducing journal writing in the grade one classroom, these teachers had been using the writing activities from the textbook. In the textbook, major activities were copying the letters, writing an appropriate word in the space provided from the given alternatives, writing a word from the given picture and writing simple sentences. Journal writing is a new technique of writing to these teachers.

In the workshop, the teachers were asked to bring the sample copies of students' journals. The teachers shared

some of the journal entries in terms of what the students had written. After sharing, I put the following questions out for discussion among participants:

-Did the students enjoy journal writing?

-What did you find in the student journal writing?

-Is there any purpose in students' writing?

-Were they able to convey messages in writing?

With the help of these questions, the group came up with the following writing behaviors of students:

1. Students enjoyed journal writing after proper modeling by the teacher. They were very eager to write when their teachers asked them to write.
2. There was a very close relationship between what they had drawn and what they have written down in words. In some journals more drawings were noticed than written words or sentences.
3. Students were able to write from left to right when writing words and sentences. In Nepali, it is essential to put a line above each word. All the students put a line above each word.
4. Some students wrote only words. A few students wrote one or more sentences.
5. In Nepali written language, one line (called Purna Biram) is required to indicate a complete sentence as a period is

used in English. It was found that very few students put Purna Biram or a line at the end of sentences.

6. Students could write the simple words but had a hard time stringing words together.

7. Students tried to write in words even though the writing was conventionally incorrect.

8. Different levels of writing were noticed. For example, some students were able to write words whereas some students were able to write sentences.

9. In students' writing, the influence of mother tongue was also noticed.

10. It was evident from the journal that students tried to convey the message through drawings and words and sentences which were not conventionally correct but the teachers could understand the intentions of the students' writing.

Strengths Identified by the Teachers in Using Journal

Following are the strengths identified by the teachers after using journal writing in the classroom.

1. Involving students in journal writing set the habit of writing.

2. Students tried to describe the pictures in words although they were not conventionally correct.

3. Teachers could understand the students writing ability.

4. Students could express in drawing pictures of an event that they had observed.

5. It was an opportunity for the students to write what they had experienced.

6. As the students have more opportunity to write their vocabularies will increase.

7. Thinking skills of the students will improve.

Problems of Journal Writing in the Classroom

Following are the problems identified by the teachers after using journal writing in the classroom

1. Reading student journals was time consuming.

2. Lack of paper and pencils for the students also created problems.

3. Large class size and the limited 45 minute classes was a problem to manage both journal writing and regular teaching.

4. The presence of underage children created another problem. Underage children had problems in writing.

Discussion

The teachers liked the idea of journal writing in the classroom very much. However they had problems in managing time, paper and pencils in the classroom. Of course, journal writing is time consuming because of the large class size. Although parents are responsible for providing necessary papers and pencils to their children for classroom

use, most of them could not provide stationery because of their low income.

Attitude or Experiences of Teachers Towards Journal Writing

The following are the experiences of the teachers as expressed in their reflective journals, during workshop discussions as well as during interviews:

The teachers were at first reluctant to use the idea of journal writing in the classroom. This was because the major writing activities carried out in the classroom were copying the letters of alphabet, copying words, copying the sentences, write the words of the given pictures, fill in the blanks, matching the words. The following attitudes were found after using the different techniques of journal writing in the classroom:

1. "I asked my students to draw some pictures of what they have observed in a local festival "Mattaya", and write in words what they have drawn. At first the students were hesitant to draw. They even said I do not know how to draw. I agreed with them because they did not have drawing classes and they were less exposed to the picture books. But I insisted them to write whatever they can. Some of my students just drew what they had seen in the festival and some did both drawing and some writing." (Miss Chameli expressed on the fourth day of workshop)

"I am very surprised to see how expressive my students are in drawing what they have experienced. Although they have just drawn the pictures only and have written few sentences about the picture they have drawn, they explained to me what they have seen in the festival. I come to know that children were very keen in observing the things in an environment which I can strengthen by allowing them to use in the classroom. I also felt that my students are able to express what they have seen in their life. Now I believe that journal writing can be used in my classroom." (Expressed by Miss Geeta on the fourth day of workshop)

2. "I asked my students to write what did you do on the weekend. I asked them to draw and write in the words. After reading their journal entries, I come to know that almost all of my students watched TV on the weekend. Besides, it gave me an idea of how they have spent their weekend. I also found out their writing ability. Through this activity, I also found out that some students had difficulty in writing joint letters. Now I can fix it. Journal writing in the classroom gave me an opportunity to know students personally and their writing level." (Miss Chameli, Journal Entry, August 27, 1997).

3. "I used journal writing after reading a story. I asked my students to draw what you like about the story and I asked them to write what they have drawn. I found that the

students are quite good in drawing what they have listened in story reading and they are good in writing what they want to say. I even noticed that what they want to write is not conventionally correct. I found out that journal writing is a means to comprehend what they have listened." (Miss Geeta, Journal entry, August 11, 1997).

"I realized the importance of students' involvement in writing. The writing ability of the students can be enhanced by allowing them in the expressive writing." (Teacher Chameli expressed on the fourth day of workshop).

4. "In the workshop we discussed about correcting the journal. I realized that the main objective of journal writing was to involve the students in expressive writing and a means to know students personally. I come to know that journal writing should not be corrected. I agree with this idea, but I was scared with my principal. What did she say if I did not correct the mistake made by my students in their journal? In the same way, I got scared with the parents about not correcting the mistakes. So I decided to limit correcting the mistakes. I decided to correct three or five mistakes. But I like the idea of journal writing for the writing development of my students. (Teacher Geeta, Fourth day of workshop)

5. "Students journals were very short in lengths, (maximum four line) Teacher Chameli expressed at the fourth day of workshop.

She expressed that the possible reason could be the time factor because journal writing was carried out only in the classroom. She wondered whether the journal would be long enough if students were asked to write at their homes.

Teachers' Perceptions on Using Journal Writing in the Classroom

In the opinion of Miss Kamala, journal writing was a good activity for engaging children in writing about their experiences. According to her modeling was necessary in the beginning. For example, when she asked the children to draw their faces, the children were confused about drawing their faces. After modeling children showed interest in drawing and writing on the journals. She noticed a variety of responses in the journal writing. She asked the children to draw their family members and write who they are. Children responded in different ways. Some children drew family members and labeled mom, dad, and sisters. Some children just drew the family members and could not carry out the labeling.

Miss Chameli expressed that journal writing was a good process to enhance the writing development of young

children. According to her, children benefited in the following ways:

-improved comprehension abilities,

-developed the habit of writing,

-wrote more correctly.

Miss Geeta was of the view that through journal writing, children could express what they had seen in certain situations in the form of drawing. Children would try to write in words after drawing which eventually helped to develop the writing abilities of the students.

Discussion

All the teachers found the importance of various aspects of journal writing in their classroom. They identified the student's abilities in expressing their daily experiences in the form of drawings. The teachers also realized that children try to write in words what they had drawn in the picture. The teachers also expressed that journal writing helped them understand students personally, in terms of writing abilities.

All the teachers have shown their interest to continue journal writing in their classes once a week. The reasons behind this were: responsibilities to finish the loaded curriculum on the given time and large class size.

Miss Kamala suggested that activities for journal writing should be included in the present curriculum of grade one. In which case it will be a part of activities in the instruction.

Reflections on the Class that I Taught

During my data collection, I planned to read storybooks in grade one in a local government school of Lalitpur District. The main purpose of reading storybooks in grade one was to experience the importance of reading storybooks to young children. Moreover, I wanted to see how these children felt about storybook reading which was a new method in Nepal. It was a great time for me to be with these students for six weeks. During this period, I kept my reflective journal after each class. While I was reading stories, the class teacher sat on the back bench of the classroom and observed the class. After the class, we would have a conversation about the effectiveness of the class.

Given below are my reflections on the importance of reading storybooks to young children.

Good Listeners

First of all, I noticed that the students were very good at listening to stories. They listened very attentively. After completing the story, I would ask

questions based on it. The children were very eager to answer these questions.

How well were these children into listening to stories? I could tell by what the class teacher said "I cannot believe these students listened to the story so attentively."

I would like to share one anecdote from my journal. One day I read a picture book about a 'kite' (children of Nepal are very fond of flying kites at this time of the year because of the Dashain Festival). This was a colored picture book with lots of illustrations on it. After reading the book, I asked the class to tell me what they liked most about the book. Most of the students replied that they like to, have a kite, fly kite, have a green kite, make a big kite, and buy a kite. One student sitting at the back bench of the class replied that he liked the 'Rocket' most in that book. 'Rocket' was the word which was used in the book only once and at the end of the story. I could understand how attentive the children had been while the stories are being read.

Another piece of evidence was that while I was reading a picture book, one student pointed out that I had missed a page. I had not missed the page. The reason the student thought a page had been missed was that there was no print to read. I had to explain that there was only illustration

on that page. That was why I did not read that page. I realized that the students were very attentive in listening to stories although they were not used to listening the stories in the class. Besides, they are very keen in observing the illustrations of the book.

High Participation in the Classroom

Before reading a book, I would discuss the title and the pictures on the title page. I would give the students some time to think and predict what they felt about the picture and the title of the book. I found them quite active saying what they felt. I think there was good participation. During reading, I would ask some questions e.g "what is going to happen next?" I was very happy to hear all the possible answers. After reading, I would ask general questions and factual questions based on the book. I would ask them questions first, then I would give the students an opportunity to think. All the students would raise their hands as I asked the questions. Only then I would ask for an answer from a particular student. After the class, the class teacher remarked that even the shy students took part in discussion and in answering the questions. I realized that reading stories helped the students think and say what they feel. It gave them a chance to express their inner feelings which is very important in language development.

Request for the Books or More Reading

On the third day of my class, I read a new story book. It was necessary to introduce new books. Hedan (1997) stated that new books would expand the child's repertoire and provide fresh characters and events to talk about. After I finished reading that book, one of the student asked me, "would you please read the book Mangale Ko Changa?" This was a book I had read on the first day of class. Then the rest of the class requested me to read that book. I realized that by the third day of instruction they requested the book of their interest and they even noticed the name of the book and asked for more reading.

Reading for Enjoyment

I realize that the children enjoyed story reading by the teacher. I collected some evidence to support these facts. Normally my class was immediately after the recess. When they saw me, they just ran to the classroom saying 'Miss is here to read story for us." I could see how excited they were to see me.

One day I could not go to the school. I could not inform the students although I informed the class teacher. The next day I was asked by the students "Why did not you come yesterday? We missed reading stories."

Another time, I informed the class that I would not be able to come for the next class. One of the students asked if I could kindly give some story books to their class teacher so that she could read to them. That was a neat idea the children had. The class teacher actually had some books that I had given her.

One of the students in the class asked me to copy a story for him and he handed his writing book to me. I would have liked to give him a book but I could not give books to all the children. I copied him a story as requested by the student.

I can tell with all these evidences that kids enjoy reading, even these kids who were read stories for the first time.

Making Connection of Story with own Life Experiences

Along with my story reading, I noticed that children make connection with the story to their own life. One day I was reading the story about a monkey. The students started to tell:

-they had seen monkeys at Pashupati Nath (Pashupati Nath is one of the famous holy temple of Lord Shiva which is situated in the middle of the jungle.
There are lots of monkeys)

-monkey carring the baby at the back,

-monkey eating corn, and lice,

-they are scared of monkey,

-monkey made the sound Chi, Chi,

-monkey did some tricks with the tricky man,

After hearing all these statements, I realized that these students could make connections between what they knew and the story that they heard read to them. This allowed them to build an understanding that the interpretation of the print lies within his or her experience.

Reading and Writing Connections

As I read the story I realized that reading leads to writing. I read a poem entitled "Sujikar". "Sujikar is a term used in Nepali to address a person's profession who makes shirts, pants, blouses and caps etcetera. After reading the poem "Sujikar" they started to tell me the different items that sujikar made. I then asked the class to make a list of items that a "Sujikar" made in their own writing. They came up with quite a list. That day I did the listing activity with the help of reading.

Some other day after reading the story, I used to ask the class to draw what you liked most about the story and write in words. They were very good at drawing pictures out of the story and writing about it.

From this evidence I realized that story reading is very important for young children for their language development. There are many important factors underlying story reading which I came to realize practically, only after reading stories to young children.

In addition, this class helped me to support the ideas expressed by the teachers on the workshop. One of the teachers in the workshop expressed that even the shy students took part in picture discussion. This was also evident in the class.

Changes in Teaching Profession Perceived by the Teachers after Workshops

On the fourth day of the workshop, I asked the teachers about the effectiveness of the workshop. The teachers expressed that the content of the workshops was very useful to them in implementing teaching ideas and methodology. Given below are some of the points they have mentioned about the changes they had noticed in their teaching and professional development.

Reflective Journal

The teachers noticed that a reflective journal was the best way to reflect on own their teaching. Once they reflected on their teaching, they came to realize what was good in their teaching and what needed to be improved.

These teachers had never had a chance to reflect on their teaching. In Nepal, effective teaching was assessed by the supervisor who comes into the class occasionally. While observing the class, the supervisor would emphasis on the use of appropriate teaching methods and instructional materials, and students' participation. After the class, the supervisor would give positive and negative comments about the teaching in the class. The supervisor never asked the teacher how he/she felt about his/her own teaching. Miss Kamala realized the importance of self reflection in teaching rather than the comments from supervisor. She expressed that she was very happy to reflect on her own teaching to bring about necessary changes.

Miss Chameli expressed the importance of responses by the researcher in her reflective journal. She indicated that the responses in her journal entries were really a motivating factor to reflect on her further journal entries. It helped her to build her self esteem in her teaching.

Miss Geeta agreed with what her colleagues said about reflective journal entries and responses on the journal entries. She did not add any thoughts of her own in this regard.

Community of Learners

The teachers expressed that the most important outcome of the workshop was the creation of a community of learners. They realized that it helped them a lot when they got an opportunity to talk about their teaching within a circle of friends. They never had such educational conversation formally among fellow teachers. They realized the importance of conversation where they could hear each other's stories. They could talk about what worked and what did not work in different situations. They promised to continue the community of learning in the coming days.

Continuous Feedback

The teachers were happy to receive the continuous feedback from the researcher. The teachers in the study got two types of feedback. One was immediately after the researcher's visit to their classroom and the second was through the researcher's dialogue journaling with them. The researcher gave feedback immediately after the classroom visit which helped them to bring changes in their classroom teaching. The teachers were happy to receive the feedback on their work through dialogue journal.

Importance of Story Reading

These teachers were using only prescribed Nepali textbook for years in teaching language arts. Now they

realized the importance of reading different genre of storybooks. They expressed the need to have their own classroom library and use of the school library. In this regard Miss Chameli expressed concern over the use of the library in her school. She explained that the school library was accessible from grade four only. She wanted to use the library for grade one students by getting permission from the principal. Miss Geeta had a library in her school and she also expressed her willingness to use the library for grade one. In the school of Miss Kamala, there was no school library. She expressed her willingness to ask the school principal to buy some books for a classroom library. All the teachers in the study realized the importance and use of the library. Bessett (1969) found that children in classrooms having literature collections read 50% more books than did children in classrooms without such collections (Cited in Morrow, 1985).

Importance of Free Writing

The teachers realized the importance of involving students in free writing from the very beginning of the school year. They realized that writing activities should not be limited to the copying and writing of words and sentences. Students should be given an opportunity to write freely in order to develop writing skills. According to

Newman (1984), the daily journal, then, is full of learning potential for both children and teachers. Children have the opportunity of writing every day and of receiving almost immediate feedback on the meaning of what they have written. Teachers have the opportunity of observing children in the process of developing as readers and writers (P. 70). The teachers learned a new technique of involving students in writing activity.

The teachers learned that students writing can be displayed in the classroom and outside the classroom. Sharing of student writing was another aspect that the teachers found most interesting.

Exposure to Different Resources

Teachers were very happy to know the name and address of different agencies which were producing different storybooks. Keeping contact with different agencies will definitely increase the collections of books. They will have the books from various resources and they do not have to rely only on the books published by the local book store.

The teachers felt that the content and methodology used in the workshops were really helpful for their professional development. There is no provision of professional development days or workshop for the teachers in Nepal. These teachers were very happy to get directly involved with

the researcher. They felt that it was a great opportunity for them to be involved in the workshop, to learn new techniques, and to share own feelings about teaching. I also felt the teachers really enjoyed the content and methodology of the workshop. I was of the impression that the teachers wanted to learn some new techniques and to apply them in their classroom practice. They took some challenges in teaching and were successful.

Summary

This chapter has presented the results of the study as well as a discussion of those results. Chapter VI presents a general overview of the study and its conclusions and implication for further research and instruction.

VI OVERVIEW, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview of the Study

The study "Professional Development of Emergent Literacy Strategies in Primary Teachers of Nepal" was implemented in four schools of Lalitpur district of Nepal. The purpose of this study was twofold:

i) to acquaint teachers with the importance of sharing a wide range of literature with young children and to explore a variety of teaching strategies to engage children in expressive writing, and

ii) to have teachers actually implement these strategies in their classroom.

Workshops were the main strategy of this study. A series of five workshops were conducted for the grade one teachers.

The main objectives of the workshops were to introduce primary school teachers to:

-a wide variety of children's literature,
-the importance of reading to young children,
-strategies of reading (before, during and after reading)
-the importance of expressive writing,
-the activities for expressive writing,
-the importance of reflective journal writing, and
-ways to access a variety of story books for the classroom.

Workshops were organized in a local school of Lalitpur district on Friday afternoons as requested by the teachers and principals.

During the workshops, strategies of reading stories (before reading, during reading and after reading) and the importance of reading to children were discussed. The importance of journal writing and different techniques of journal writing were also discussed. Teachers worked both independently and as a group in the workshops.

Teachers were asked to use the strategies learned in the workshops in their following classes at school. These included reading stories with the children, discussions after reading stories and student journal writing.

Teachers were also asked to write reflective journals after each class. Points to be included in the journal were discussed. One or two journal entries of their choices were also shared in the workshops.

Implications

Implications for Classroom Instruction

1. The concept of reading stories to children was well accepted by the participant primary teachers. They were very delighted to introduce a wide variety of children's storybooks in the classroom.

2. According to teachers, children were very excited to have picture books in the class. As the teacher read the picture books, students articulated a lot and linked the picture book with their daily activities. Because of these activities, teachers found high student participation in the classroom.

3. Realizing the positive impact of reading stories to children, all the participant teachers decided to use storybooks in their higher grades (i.e., grade two and grade three classes). They got the same positive reactions from the higher grade students as they found from grade one students.

4. Teachers realized that children's literature can be used as an effective method of teaching language arts in the classroom.

5. The idea of introducing journal writing in the classroom was also well received by the participant teachers.

6. All the participant teachers pledged to continue the story reading and journal writing in the classroom at least twice a week because of the load of curriculum and other problems.

7. Realizing its importance and the tangible positive results, other teaching colleagues of the participant teachers copied the model of story reading to students for use in their class.

Implication Regarding the Children's Story Books

1. Teachers found difficult and abstract vocabularies in the storybooks used in the workshop, to some extent. None of the storybooks used in the workshop were labeled according to grade level. None of them contained a list of vocabularies to be mastered by the young reader either.
2. Among the storybooks used in the workshops, the story books published by the project offices were found better than storybooks published by other local publishers in terms of illustrations, font sizes, story length, plot and settings. However, the storybooks published by the project offices were limited to use only in the project schools and were not available on the market.

The set of books published by a school was available on the market, but they were expensive. Participant teachers were not aware of the availability of these books in the market either.

Implications for Professional Development of Primary Teachers

Teachers showed high interest in the use of new challenges in the classroom. They made a great effort to reflect on their own teaching. They were happy to share their reflections in the group. A lively discussion of their problems and concerns of teaching was also noticed.

The teachers realized the importance of reflection on one's teaching and the sharing of the ideas in the community of learners for bringing improvement in their teaching profession. In this context, the teachers also realized the importance of the researcher sharing her experience related to reading literature and doing expressive writing in a classroom while in Nepal.

Implications for Further Research

1. An intensive comparative study should be carried out to measure the effect of story reading and journal writing in grade one students' achievement in language arts.
2. A qualitative study should be carried out to see what changes in teaching is noticed after engaging the teachers in reflective practice and sharing it in a community of learners.

Recommendations

1. Since the teachers pointed out the positive effect of reading stories to young children, use of children's literature and journal writing, should be incorporated in the primary language arts curriculum.
2. In each classroom of the primary school, there should be a library corner containing different genres of children's books.

3. Different age appropriate picture books for young readers in relation to the interesting places, local festivals, different ethnic culture should be published and made available on the market at the reasonable cost.

4. The importance of reading to children and use of different types of children's literature should be introduced in the primary school teacher training program.

5. Parents of Nepal could be informed about the importance of reading to young children through workshops, seminars and other means.

6. The system of mobile library should be introduced in the Primary Schools of Nepal. The mobile library presently run by NESCHIL is another means to make the books available in the classroom.

7. Teachers should be given an opportunity to reflect on their own teaching and share the problems and concerns with their colleagues within a community of learners.

8. Principals of the schools are in a position to take responsibility for creating such a learning environment for the teachers. They could provide necessary feedback to their teachers. Friday afternoons could be utilized for these professional development activities. Having teachers try ideas in their classrooms and come to Friday professional development activities to share how ideas worked was a successful strategy in this research.

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Appendix A

Consent to Participate in Research

I,....., consent to participate in the research entitled *Professional Development of Emergent Literacy Strategies in Primary Teachers of Nepal.*

The nature and purpose of the research have been explained to me by the researcher. The researcher is authorized to carry out the research on the understanding that I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time I so desire without penalty.

I understand that my responsibility in the research is to take part in the series of the workshops designed to implement the reading and writing strategies to enhance the emergent literacy and to use those strategies in my own classroom and share my experience with the researcher in using those strategies. I am also aware that I will share my experiences in individual interview and group discussions organized by the researcher. I also give consent to the researcher to sit in my class.

I understand that reasonable safeguards have been taken to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the information I will give in the research.

I will be given a copy of this consent form. If I have any questions concerning the study I can contact Bejuna

Joshi, at 48 Bakum Bahal Lalitpur 11 Nepal. Phone no. 526815

Signed.....

Date.....

Appendix B

Teachers Questionnaire

1. General Information:

Full Name:

Educational Qualification:

Teaching Experience:

Training (if any):

2. Classroom Information:

Name of School:

Specify the grades you are presently teaching:

Number of students in Grade one:

No of Boys:

No of Girls:

Specify the duration of class:

3. Information regarding teaching language arts:

a. What are the major contents have you taught up to now?

b. What are the major activities did you carry out in your Nepali classroom?

c. What is the present level of students in reading and writing?

d. What are the major problems/issues or concerns in your language arts class?

Appendix C

Questionnaire for Teacher Interview

1. Did you ever read story in the classroom before participating in the Workshop?
2. How often did you read story or poems in your classroom after participating in the workshop?
3. Could you please tell me about your experience of reading storybooks in the classroom?
4. What types of storybooks did you find more relevant for grade one students?
5. Were there any problems you encountered while reading storybook in the classroom?
6. Are you going to read story to children in the coming days?
7. As I mentioned about the possibility of reading stories by inviting parents, grand parents, and senior grade students, what are your opinions regarding the implications of this strategy?
8. Based on your experience could you please give me some suggestions for using children books in the classroom?
9. We talked about the importance of library/reading corner in the classroom. What are the strategies do you think that can be applied to collect more books?
10. Tell me your experience of using journal writing in the classroom?

11. What are the major activities did you carry out in using journal writing?
12. What is your plan for using journal writing in teaching?
13. Did you encounter any problems while using journal writing in the classroom? If yes, please explain the problems you encountered.
14. Could you give me some suggestions for further implementation of journal writing in the classroom?
15. This is my last question (open). Please add further suggestions (if any) regarding workshop, reading storybook and journal writing in the classroom.